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THE DECLINE OF THE DEMOCRATIC PARTY

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By the adoption of the Chicago platform of 1896 the Democratic party not only took up the fight for the free coinage of silver but also declared itself the party of protest upon economic questions, which arose out of deeper sources of discontent. It repudiated the administration of Grover Cleveland, its only president since Buchanan, and by its rebirth it came within Burke's definition "of a body of men united for promoting by their joint endeavors the national interest upon some particular principle in which they are all agreed." The platform inadequately expressed the intense feeling of those who adopted it, for no campaign document could mirror their belief that they were engaged in a fight for freedom. There were declarations in favor of an income tax and a stricter control of monopoly. They continued to advocate a non-protective tariff. They denounced "government by injunction," censured the judiciary, and threatened its independence. Yet the adoption of the entire program of the Populist party, had this occurred, would have been unimportant compared with a simple declaration of a determination to free the hewers of wood and the drawers of water from an economic bondage to a money oligarchy. Except for the advocacy of free silver, which was the paramount issue, remedies and methods were to wait upon that time when the masses had taken control of their government.

We are unalterably opposed to monometallism, which has locked fast prosperity of an industrial people in the paralysis of hard times. Gold monometallism is a British policy, and its adoption has brought other nations into financial servitude to London. It is not only un-American, but anti-American, and it can be fastened on the United States only by the stifling of that spirit and love of liberty which proclaimed our political independence in 1776 and won it in the war of the Revolution.¹

¹ Platform of the Democratic party adopted at Chicago, July 8, 1896.

The appeal to the growing distrust of the relation between business and government, as well as the advocacy of free silver, brought to the support of the Democratic nominee the Populist party, the only important reform organization then existing. It startled conservative Democrats into a denunciation of an "attack upon individual freedom, the right of private contract, the independence of the judiciary, and the authority of the President to enforce federal laws."¹ Discount may be made from the statements of those engaged in the fray, but a senator of the United States wrote in the established journal of literature:

The real enemies of society, the men who arouse the mobs in our cities, and in order to remedy evils, sometimes fancied, sometimes real, would resist the officers of the law, destroy property, burn buildings, and commit homicides, will rush naturally to the support of the candidates nominated at Chicago. They cannot be shaken off. They will find in the platform much encouragement. They will find still more in Mr. Bryan's speech made immediately after his nomination.²

That the Democratic party did not win the entire radical element, even in this campaign, was found in the vote cast for the Social Labor candidate, and that it was a temporary makeshift for others was revealed in the organization of the Social Democratic party the year following. Yet the heat of this campaign molded the party attitude and it remained rigidly set in the four campaigns that followed. A state convention sent "greeting to nearly 7,000,000 patriots who participated and aided in the battle for the people in this struggle for their rights in the last campaign . . . believing that the very existence of the farming, laboring, and commercial interests of the country depends upon a change in our financial policy."³ To this the National Democrats of the same state retorted: "The doctrines of paternalism, class legislation, and debased coinage . . . are . . . abhorrent to every true Democrat."

It was this identification with the forces of discontent that determined Democratic history during the ensuing sixteen years. The

¹ Platform of the National Democratic (Gold) party adopted at Indianapolis, September 2, 1896.

² W. E. Chandler in the *North American Review*, August, 1896.

³ Platform of Iowa Democratic state convention (1897).

outcome in 1896 settled "free silver," as a paramount issue, and unquestionably the taint of cheap-money advocacy lamed the party even in regions that had remained loyal in the confusion of the first conflict. Yet, this issue no longer vital, the party continued to voice protest upon the other points. More charges were added to the indictment and Socialistic tendencies became more, not less, marked. With the exception of the Parker candidacy in the campaign of 1904 the party held to its character of 1896 as an agency of vehement protest. At least thus have read its declarations, and its most conspicuous leader has been the embodiment of the desire that the most democratic elements should rule. Judged by its platforms it has sought to be the party of revolution.

That it failed to represent the growing radicalism within the country was evidenced by more than the mounting Socialist vote. The conduct of the Democratic representatives in Congress was inconsistent and, on the whole, inconsequential. Bryan, throughout this period the most powerful leader in the party, eloquent and sincere, and truly representative of western Democracy, was brought to the advocacy of the income tax, direct legislation, government ownership, and even the guaranty of bank deposits, not by a well-grounded belief in Socialist principles, but by a simple desire to restore to the middle class of America the equal opportunities of a pioneer era.

Moreover, throughout these years when the strong radicalism of the West gave color to the party, not only were seven-eighths of its national representatives from the South yet in the pre-capitalistic stage, but in each election from one-third to one-half of its votes were cast in the East and the older Middle West, where a majority of the Democrats were not in sympathy with the new Democracy and, save for the sense of party regularity, would have gone elsewhere to uphold the principles of Tilden and Cleveland. The incongruous elements that made up the Democratic party were not fully revealed until it again assumed control of the national government.

In examining the history of the party it has seemed that the period from 1896 to 1908 formed a period of decline. The new Democracy polled an immense vote in 1896 and steadily declined

in public confidence until in the campaign of 1908 it cast less than 44 per cent of the total vote. In fact the period of decline might be lengthened by four years. This paper places a limit at 1908 for two reasons: (1) With the opening of the Taft administration the split in the Republican party became so serious as to make Democratic success certain, irrespective of a continued minority support. (2) During this period public interest in a party of protest was transferred from the Democrats to the Progressive Republicans. Notwithstanding the split in the opposition, and the relatively less radical stand of the Democracy, Wilson polled in 1912 only 42 per cent of the total vote, and considering the distribution of the vote and the character of the contest the Democracy was revealed as weaker than at any time in the preceding sixteen years.

I

In the Democratic convention of 1896 the delegations from the East and a portion of those from the Middle West stood out against the declaration in favor of free silver. The successful majority came from the South and West, from regions in which many Democrats had favored such a financial declaration as early as 1892¹ and in which the Populist party had revealed great strength.² The Democratic vote in November indicated that the delegates had represented the desires of their respective sections. Bryan polled 6,533,080 votes, nearly a million more than had been cast for Cleveland in 1892, and more than the Democracy polled in any subsequent election. This increase was general throughout the Union except in the northeastern section where Bryan's vote fell 325,000 below that of Cleveland. The Democratic majorities were largest in Texas and Colorado. Bryan carried twenty-two states, twelve of them in the South and ten in the recently settled trans-Missouri West. In spite of a greatly increased Democratic vote throughout the Ohio River valley, Bryan failed to carry any state in the older section of the Middle West.

¹ Democratic conventions (1892) in Colorado, Florida, Georgia, Idaho, Kansas, Nevada, South Carolina, and Texas had declared for free and unlimited coinage of silver.

² The Populists had carried Colorado, Idaho, Kansas, and Nevada, and one elector in North Dakota and in Oregon (1892).

A more minute analysis of the vote shows that little more than a third of the Democratic vote was cast in the states carried by Bryan. These twenty-two states had dictated the platform and named the candidate. There were 4,109,652 Democratic votes in the states carried by McKinley and of these more than 2,000,000 were cast in the Middle West and 1,500,000 in five states, New York, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Delaware, and Maryland. A sectional ticket was accorded a national vote. Of course the decisive Democratic vote was sectional. Although of the 2,760 counties in the United States Bryan led McKinley in 1,617, those majorities were distributed as follows: in New England Bryan carried no county, in the Middle section nineteen, in the older Middle West 134, in the trans-Mississippi West 204, in the Far West 214, and in the fifteen states of the South 1,046. McKinley carried only 1,143 counties, but they were in sections of country of densest population. Bryan carried only one city of any size, New Orleans. There is every reason to accept the usual view that the Democracy of 1896 had its appeal in mining and agricultural regions of the nation; particularly in localities of sparse population and in areas recently settled.

Early in the campaign so strong had been the hostile feeling between the East and West that two United States senators, Allen of Nebraska and Teller of Colorado, felt called upon to express the loyalty of the West to the nation and to disclaim any thought of an independent existence. Both pointed out the lack of understanding of the West among easterners, and stated that two conditions were making for absence of mutual sympathy; divergent economic interests and the decrease in the number of westerners who had been born in the East.¹ The campaign accentuated sectional disagreement. Senator Tillman had proclaimed the union of West and South against the East, and Candidate Bryan kept this phase of the struggle well in the foreground. The metropolitan press was bitter; its attacks upon Bryan were unprecedented in vituperation and vindictiveness. The depth of the misunderstanding can be revealed in no better way than by quoting from a speech

¹ W. V. Allen, "Western Feeling toward the East," *North American Review*, CLXII, 588 (May, 1896); H. M. Teller, "The Loyal West," *ibid.*, 757 (June, 1896).

delivered in Boston by Senator Hoar, of Massachusetts, some three weeks after the election:

It is certainly a sad thing to think that states like Kansas and Nebraska, children of New England, that have great farming populations, where we expect to find, if we find anywhere, sobriety, integrity, steadiness, conservatism, the great communities where churches abound and where schools are the best in the world, should have lent themselves to this crazy attempt at revolution and this passionate crusade of dishonor.¹

The attitude of prominent Republicans did not tend to lessen Democratic restlessness in defeat. Early in the last session of the Cleveland administration Senator Chandler, of New Hampshire, said, in opposing the consideration of a resolution providing for the popular elections of senators, "I had supposed that this Populist idea would disappear after the election of last November."² Somewhat later while discussing the "Free Homestead Bill," Senator Allen, of Nebraska, pointed out that the principle of the bill had been indorsed in both Republican and Democratic platforms in the preceding campaign. Senator Platt, of Connecticut, took the floor to say, "We all understand how matters creep into national platforms; and I venture to say that when that resolution and that platform were adopted there were not fifty delegates in the St. Louis convention that paid any attention to it or knew what it was about, or had any idea what it involved." Senator Allen queried, "But are they not bound by it?" Senator Platt, "I am not."³ Seeking to uncover the position of those Democrats who had refused to support the Chicago platform, Senator Allen provoked Senator Vilas, of Wisconsin, to say, "There is almost nothing in the platform to which the Senator alludes which I do not consider inimical to the welfare of the people of the United States."⁴

Nor were the radical Democrats silent in this defeat. Bryan, terming the campaign "the first battle," declared his intention of making the new Democracy the instrument of the popular will. The repeated charge that the Republicans had won only with the use of money added zest to the Democratic propaganda. It fit well upon the Chicago platform. The last session of the Cleveland

¹ Reprinted, *Congressional Record*, XXIX, 133-34.

² *Ibid.*, 138.

³ *Ibid.*, 539.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 718.

administration witnessed the abuse of Cleveland by southern members of the Democratic party and the assumption of control of Senate proceedings by a group of Republican senators from New England, a control that continued unbroken for fifteen years.¹

At the same time Senator Hill, who had led the anti-silver delegates at Chicago, came forward as a reorganizer of the Democracy. In a widely quoted paper, published late in February, the senator from New York outlined his view of the situation. After designating the declaration for an income tax, the attack upon the Supreme Court and four minor planks as "offensive provisions, or provisions of doubtful expediency, or especially those of a revolutionary and unprecedented character," he enumerated the "mistakes that must not be repeated." He declared that in reorganization, the objectionable features of the Chicago platform were to be abandoned, conservatism was to replace radicalism, selfish interests of sectionalism were to give way to the best interests of the whole country, conciliation was to displace ostracism, there was to be a broad and liberal policy in party management and greater freedom of opinion, and, in returning to the fundamental principles of Democracy, an unholy alliance with the Populists was to be avoided, agrarian and Socialistic tendencies to be checked, and a disavowal made of paternalistic doctrines.²

Interest in the future of the Democratic party abated with the opening of the McKinley administration. The tariff session gave the Democrats in public office an opportunity to take stock. They were overwhelmed in both houses and their representation was sectional; 24 of the 30 senators and 93 of the 123 representatives were from the South. Their attacks upon Republican procedure lacked force, for the dominant party, still dependent for control of the Senate upon Silver Republicans, pursued as yet a conciliatory policy on the financial issue. A wave of prosperity set in early in the summer and the Republican party was enabled to enact a highly protective tariff with unprecedented speed.

As the state elections came on in the autumn, Democratic interest revived. It was soon evident that the radical Democrats were

¹ Hale, Hoar, Morrill, Proctor, Gallinger, Chandler, Aldrich, Platt (Connecticut).

² D. B. Hill, "The Future of the Democracy," *Forum*, XXII, 645-51 (February, 1897).

in absolute control. The Colorado state convention declared: "We expressly declare our opposition to any movement which may be construed as a waiver of that issue [free silver] and pledge ourselves to do all in our power, whether alone or in conjunction with others who believe in the same thing, to defeat any candidate who accepts a nomination by those who are opposed to the principles of the Chicago platform." After this declaration little was heard of reorganization until after the second defeat of Bryan.

The country entered the congressional campaign of 1898 during the summer war with Spain. The majority of the Democratic candidates for Congress indorsed the Chicago platform. In the West the Democrats lost twelve districts, owing partly to returning prosperity but more to the popularity of the war.¹ In the East and South, in traditional Democratic areas, the Democrats elected forty-one more representatives than in 1896. This was a net gain of twenty-nine for the Democratic party, but it was more than offset by a loss of eight seats in the Senate.²

II

The Democratic party entered the campaign of 1900 with lessened enthusiasm. The Republican party had enacted a protective tariff law and on the eve of the campaign had made positive its currency attitude by the passage of the Gold Standard Act. The country appeared in a prosperous condition. Moreover, the Republican nominee had been a war president and our entrance into world-politics had enlarged our sense of national pride. It seemed an inopportune time to criticize foreign policy or revive industrial dispute. Yet it was to be done.

The platform of 1900 indorsed the silver plank of the Chicago platform. But of greater importance, both to the convention and in the campaign, was the emphasis placed upon other issues upon which the Democracy represented discontent. "The burning issue

¹ Democratic loss: Nebraska, 3; Kansas, 2; Michigan, 2; and 1 each in California, Idaho, South Dakota, Wyoming.

² Democratic gains: New York, 13; Pennsylvania, 7; North Carolina, 6; Illinois, 3; 2 each from Kentucky, Maryland, Massachusetts, New Jersey, and Virginia; and 1 each from Alabama and Montana.

of imperialism" was declared the paramount question, but nearly as much space and more severe denunciation was given on the "trust question." The indictment was bitterly stated:

Private monopolies are indefensible and intolerable. They destroy competition, control the price of raw material and of the finished product, thus robbing both producer and consumer. They lessen the employment of labor and arbitrarily fix the terms and conditions thereof; and deprive individual energy and small capital of their opportunity for betterment. They are the most efficient means yet devised for appropriating the fruits of industry to the benefit of a few at the expense of the many, and, unless their insatiate greed is checked, all wealth will be aggregated in a few hands and the Republic destroyed. . . . We pledge the Democratic party to an increasing warfare in nation, state, and city against private monopoly in every form.

The platform further called for "the election of United States senators by direct vote of the people . . . and direct legislation wherever practicable." The party was still opposed to "government by injunction."¹

Yet in spite of the content of this platform and the renomination of the militant leader of 1896, there were evidences that the Democratic party was in reality less radical than its professions indicated. It was only after a struggle that the anti-monopoly planks were included and in the heated discussion that arose in the committee over the reaffirmation of the silver platform many of the prominent silver men of 1896 fought for silence or compromise. It was indorsed by a majority of two in the committee, and only because of the insistence of the prospective nominee. Ex-Senator Hill, of New York, seconded the nomination of Bryan, Richard Croker was much in evidence at Kansas City, and Edward Shepard and Bourke Cochran, who had bolted in 1896, came to the support of the ticket. The nomination of Hill for Vice-President was prevented only by his refusal to accept, and the conservative elements were well pleased with the selection of Adlai E. Stevenson, of Illinois. Most of all a portion of the preamble of the platform

¹ A thoughtful editorial, remarkable for the correctness of its prophecy, outlined this development and subsequent developments, under the heading, "The Future of Democracy," to be found in the *Spectator* (London), LXXIX, 332-33 (September 11, 1897).

seemed strange reading to certain of the elements whose expectations had been thoroughly aroused by the Democratic campaign of 1896: "We hold with the United States Supreme Court that the Declaration of Independence is the spirit of our government, of which the Constitution is the form and letter."

This spectacle of Democratic "fit to win" spirit, coupled with the record of Democratic representatives in Congress, convinced thousands that the Democratic party was not the agency for revolution. A portion of the Populists refused to indorse the Democratic ticket and cast 49,000 votes for Wharton Barker. The Socialist Labor party held its vote of 1896. The Social Democratic party with Eugene Debs as candidate appeared for the first time in a national election and in thirty-two states polled nearly 100,000 votes.

Bryan's vote was 142,000 less than in 1896 and he carried only seventeen states, losing Kansas, Nebraska, South Dakota, Utah, Wyoming, and Washington which he had carried in 1896. His vote declined in all except one of the states that he had carried four years before. This loss amounted to 400,000 votes. It was nearly offset by gains made in the northeastern states amounting to 380,000 votes.¹

A loss in the western states had been anticipated by Mr. Bryan had the party refused to reaffirm its stand upon silver, and a gain in the northeastern states had been foreseen by Mr. Hill had the party permitted that issue to be ignored. The result would seem to indicate that in both West and East a considerable portion of the electorate was impressed with the returning conservatism of the party in spite of its professions in the platform and its choice of a standard-bearer.

As a result of the elections in the fall of 1900 the Democrats gained three seats in the Senate and had their House membership cut down by ten. For the first time since 1876 a ruling party had won a third consecutive congressional election. The Republican party was a unit as at no time in its history. Moreover, it had control of the national government by a series of popular mandates

¹ An extended analysis of the vote of 1900 is given by W. H. Allen, "The Election of 1900," *Annals of the American Academy*, XVII, 53-73.

that were impressive by reason of the efforts made to change them. The outlook for a party of protest was not promising.

Standing as the Democratic party did between the settled conservatism of the Republican party, that was never so evident as at the second inauguration of McKinley, and the increasing number of those who were turning to a consideration of the teachings of Socialism, it was natural that there should be a strong tendency for the party still further to invade the field of the radicals, and as inevitable that there should first be a stronger current to prevent this development. The second defeat of Bryan gave the conservative Democrats the opportunity that had eluded them throughout the first term of McKinley's administration. Eastern Democrats pointed out the undeniable fact that as the Democracy had been led it had failed to secure a support of a majority of voters. To the average politician the obvious course to pursue was to change leaders, for by 1901 Bryan had become to the mass of voters the embodiment of the new Democracy, and to retire him would in the public mind change the character of the party. In a sense this was true, for his relinquishment of the leadership for the reasons given would inevitably give place to some one of the Democratic leaders who had not found the platform of 1896 to his liking. This current of public opinion was particularly strong in the months immediately following the election. But it was very soon pointed out that the hope of the Democracy rested in greater, not less, radicalism. The Republican party was as definitely determined the party of wealth and conservatism as the Democracy was stamped as the party of protest. Various minor parties were pointing to the need of greater safeguards for democracy. The call was for a greater party of continued protest. It was clear that the Democratic party ought to invade the domain of the Socialists, that, in addition to its previous reforms, it should urge, among other things, the government ownership of monopolies. This view gained ground until some months after Roosevelt succeeded McKinley.

Bryan apparently saw at once the effect that the change of leadership of the Republican party would have upon the immediate future of the Democratic party. After Roosevelt's first message to Congress in December of 1901, Bryan in all his discussion of the

president—and no other single topic received as much attention—stressed the possible differences between professions and performances. Divining as certainly as did Roosevelt the prime importance of the “trust question,” he repeatedly pointed out the difference between “preventing evils in trust organization and practice” and the Democratic plan “for destroying every private monopoly.”¹ Notwithstanding the statements of Bryan—and he was upheld in his view of the president by the Democratic leaders in Congress—the popularity of Roosevelt’s position on the trusts and his action in the coal strike of 1902 brought thousands of supporters to his standard who had for ten years been interested in reform movements, and, of late, had been followers of Bryan.

As the attention of the electorate became fixed more and more upon the question of Roosevelt’s ability to retain the leadership of his party and took little notice of the policy of the Republican party, Bryan may well have felt that the greater danger for the radical Democracy lay in the nomination of a conservative Democrat, although the platform should be one of mild protest. This did become the policy of those who were termed “reorganizers.” At the same time, particularly early in 1902, in answer to the taunts of the Socialist press that the Democratic party was soon to disappear as a major party, because of its failure adequately to express the radical program demanded by an increasing number, Mr. Bryan took pains to enumerate the planks of the last platform that showed “the party marching forward as rapidly as issues develop.”²

The election of 1902 revealed the fact that all the independent political movements that had filled much of the preceding thirty years had lost their hold. It was, as far as results were concerned, a straight two-party contest, and the Democratic party elected more Congressmen than at any time for ten years. Part of the increase was due to the reapportionment on the basis of the new census, but there were actual gains. There appeared in the new Congress 174 Democrats, 29 of them new men from the North. In the Senate there were three new Democratic members from Kentucky, Maryland, and Nevada. For the first time since 1890 there were

¹ *The Commoner* (condensed), II, 182, 300, 392; III, 84; IV, 35.

² *Ibid.*, II, 88.

no independents of any kind in Congress. Protest from minor parties seemed to have run its usual course, and soon after the assembling of this Congress there were renewed indications that the Democratic party was to forsake its program of protest and was to assume the guardianship of the "Constitution."

The preliminaries of the convention of 1904 revealed the weakness of the Democracy. The bulk of the Democrats in national public office were southerners. Yet a movement to consider a nominee from the South came to nothing. To consider any possible westerner was futile for, if it was to be a representative of Democracy of 1896 or 1900, none could compete with the twice-defeated Bryan. The Middle West had no candidate. The candidate of the Democracy must come from the East and from New York. Alton B. Parker was finally fixed upon as the man and his New York managers came to St. Louis with a sufficient number of delegates to nominate him on the first ballot. His most conspicuous opponent was W. R. Hearst, of San Francisco and New York, an advocate of extreme economic and social reforms and chiefly known through the medium of his several newspapers.

III

During the preliminaries of the Democratic convention of 1904 Bryan, in public address and particularly through the medium of *The Commoner*, urged upon the Democratic "rank and file" to express their views upon the plans of the "reorganizers." His own position was one of absolute opposition to the plans of David B. Hill, of New York, and to the candidacy of Alton B. Parker. He proposed no candidate, but he prepared the resolutions of the Nebraska state convention which declared: "Democracy would oppose as inimical to the welfare of the people all private monopolies and would exterminate them by the enforcement of the remedies suggested in the Kansas City (1900) platform." The resolution called for an income tax, the direct election of United States senators, direct legislation, and declared against government by injunction. With this declaration as a basis for action Bryan went to the St. Louis convention with the intention of preventing the adoption of a national platform which should either be silent on

"trusts," as many harmonizers desired, or meaningless, as had been the New York state platform.¹

The only real contest in the convention took place in the Committee on Resolutions. The nature of the struggle was revealed in the distribution of the vote of the subcommittee on the question of a declaration for the gold standard. The committee divided seven to five: Daniels (Virginia), Hill (New York), Pattison (Pennsylvania), Poe (Maryland), Hamlin (Massachusetts), Cable (Georgia), Davis (West Virginia) for the declaration; Williams (Mississippi), Bryan (Nebraska), Dubois (Idaho), Shiveley (Indiana), Newlands (Nevada) were opposed. The full committee dropped this plank by a vote of thirty-five to fifteen. Bryan drew that portion of the declaration that dealt with the prosecution of trusts and it was supported by the western members and opposed by the eastern members and most of those from the South. A declaration for an income tax was omitted. Pettigrew, of South Dakota, proposed a resolution calling for government ownership of railroads and it was rejected. Repeatedly it was urged by members from the East and South that wherever differences of opinion arose the questions should be dropped. Even Bryan evidenced willingness upon minor matters but with reference to the question of "trusts" he was firm. "The Democracy must maintain its well-understood attitude toward plutocracy." In this he was upheld by the western delegates and a portion of those from the South.²

The insistent fighting of Bryan, coupled with the desire of the eastern managers in control of the nomination not to offend the western Democrats, resulted in a platform that is distinctly one of protest. "We denounce protection as a robbery of the many to enrich the few." "We favor a revision and gradual reduction of the tariff by the friends of the masses." "A private monopoly is indefensible and intolerable." The eight closing paragraphs in the platform indicted the existing Republican administration, after the manner of the colonial arraignment of George III, as arbitrary,

¹ *The Commoner* (condensed), IV, 188-91.

² A very full treatment of the Democratic convention proceedings, including the deliberations in the Committee on Resolutions, given from Mr. Bryan's viewpoint may be found in *The Commoner* (condensed), IV, 231-316.

autocratic, in open violation of or by strained construction of the law. "We would perpetuate constitutional government."

When the struggle was renewed in the convention by the reception of the Parker "gold telegram," the incongruous elements of which the party was composed were revealed with as great distinctness as before the adoption of the platform in committee. To the Parker declaration of "the gold standard as irrevocably fixed," Bryan replied in such a manner and with such response from a majority of the delegates as to make clear that poor success awaited a party that discredited even by inference the leadership of the preceding eight years.

Candidate Parker termed "constitutionalism" the paramount issue. Bryan gave his support to the ticket, repeatedly declaring, however, that the nomination of Parker virtually nullified the "trust planks" and that little advance in economic reforms could be expected in the event of his election. Nor was he content with a simple reiteration of the Democratic platform position upon this question. A few days after the St. Louis convention Bryan wrote that "now, as not when he had been a candidate, he felt free to try to ingraft new doctrines on the party creed." He invited attention to (1) government ownership and operation of railroads, (2) income tax (reaffirmed as in 1900), (3) direct legislation, (4) election of federal judges for stated periods.¹ The first of these declarations caused astonishment among those who in 1900 had accepted it that "Bryan was positively anti-Socialist" and that "he did not even believe in government ownership of railroads."² Although Bryan was soon moved to say that the Socialists were more friendly to the Republicans than to the Democrats, and that the latter party stood for "Individualism not Socialism," an explanation of his position may be found in his declaration: "The rapid growth of the Socialist party is conclusive proof that the Democratic party has been too conservative to satisfy the reform element of the country."³

The Socialist vote of 1904 had called forth this declaration. It increased fourfold over the vote of 1900. Many former Populists

¹ *Ibid.*, IV, 267-78.

² A. Watkins, "Democratic Tendencies," *The Arena*, XXIV, 225 (September, 1900).

³ *The Commoner* (condensed), IV, 448.

were now Socialists,¹ but the Populist nominee received 117,000 votes. The Socialist Labor ticket held its vote. The distribution of the vote in the western states makes it clear that thousands of followers of Bryan voted for Roosevelt because of his reputation as a "trust-buster." West of the Mississippi the Democratic vote was 500,000 less than in 1900. In the nation at large it decreased 1,272,000. There was a decrease of 300,000 in the South, where Parker carried thirteen states. In seven states, Delaware, Massachusetts, Rhode Island, West Virginia, Georgia, Mississippi, South Carolina, Parker's vote exceeded the vote cast for Bryan four years before. It is clear from this showing that the Democratic weakness in 1904 was not sectional.² Parker carried only 1,167 counties in the Union, and of these only eighty-five were in states outside of the South. The congressional elections showed the same weakness. Outside of the South only twenty-three Democratic congressmen were elected, and of these eleven were from New York City.

Roosevelt's acquisition of such widespread popular support was made possible by the failure of the Democracy to justify the expectations aroused in 1896. The party had seemed at that time to promise an emancipation from the oppressions of organized wealth, and the return of a more equitable democracy. A great minority of the voters had twice supported Bryan for these reasons. When Roosevelt professed to desire these ends a great many Democrats came to his support, particularly as the Democratic organization, in spite of the platform, was no longer the party of 1896. The outcome of this campaign made it clear that, if the Democracy was to make progress toward the realization of the planks in the platform, it would be wiser to nominate a man who could poll the vote of protest. The result strengthened the leadership of Bryan.

In commenting upon the outcome Bryan invited all Democrats to unite "in making the Democratic party a positive, aggressive, and progressive reform organization." "The Trust question presents the most acute phase of the contest between democracy and plutocracy."³ His leadership was generally accepted. In the con-

¹ W. L. Cook, *Annals of the American Academy*, XIV, 9.

² An analysis of the geographic distribution of the vote by states may be found in E. Stanwood, *History of the Presidency*, II, 137-39.

³ *The Commoner* (condensed), IV, 394.

gressional elections of 1906 the Democrats made gains, but did not reach the point of 1902. The Republicans remained in overwhelming control of the House, and the Democratic membership in the Senate sank to the lowest point, save one, since the close of Reconstruction.

On March 4, 1907, the Democratic party had been out of power ten years. A decade as a party of protest had brought a declining support from the electorate. In the meantime the Republican party had exercised an absolute control of national policy, in a manner unequaled for thoroughness or for popular support in our recent history. Moreover, the Socialist party had come forward rapidly as an agency for reform. It is, perhaps, not strange that in the years 1905-7, a frequent question was: "Has not the Democratic party outlived its usefulness?" Few who looked beneath the surface thought so, but the cause of reform, as carried forward by the Democracy, did seem a thankless task.

IV

In the course of the campaign of 1906 twenty-one Democratic state conventions indorsed Bryan as candidate for the presidency in 1908.¹ Renewed attempts to direct attention to several southerners came to nothing. The most serious opposition to the third nomination of Mr. Bryan appeared in a movement to nominate John A. Johnson, at that time governor of Minnesota. Particularly in the East was he widely discussed, and in a visit at Washington, D.C., and on a subsequent tour in the South he made a favorable impression. During this time his speeches were marked by a temperate treatment of economic questions. His record, however, showed him a radical, believing in the initiative and the referendum, a very strict control of all monopoly, and particularly antagonistic to the railway interests. As it soon developed, even he with his wide popularity and western record could make no serious progress against the Bryan enthusiasm.

¹ Alabama, Arkansas, California, Colorado, Delaware, Georgia, Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Massachusetts, Michigan, Minnesota, Missouri, Nebraska, New York, North Dakota, Ohio, Pennsylvania, Tennessee, Texas, Wisconsin.

The Democratic convention of 1908 adopted a platform that mirrored "the increasing signs of an awakening throughout the country," no resolution more so than the one in which it was stated that "Shall the people rule?" was the overshadowing issue. The party reiterated its demand for the extermination of private monopoly. Bryan had written the same demand in the two previous platforms, but in this one he added:

Among the additional remedies we specify three: First, a law preventing a duplication of directors among competing corporations; second, a license system which will, without abridging the right of each state to create corporations doing business within its limits, make it necessary for a manufacturing or trading corporation engaged in interstate commerce to take out a federal license before it shall be permitted to control as much as 25 per cent of the product in which it deals, a license to protect the public from watered stock, and to prohibit the control of such corporation of more than 50 per cent of the total amount of any product consumed in the United States; and third, a law compelling such licensed corporations to sell to all purchasers in all parts of the country on the same terms after making due allowance for cost of transportation.

This constituted the most important declaration of the party upon what the candidate considered the most acute phase of the conflict between plutocracy and democracy.

Moreover, the party pledged itself to the removal of duties upon "trust-made goods." It declared against the use of injunctions in labor disputes. Of the four proposals to which Bryan had invited Democratic attention in 1904, one only, the declaration in favor of an income tax, appeared in the platform. Instead of government ownership of railways, the platform called for a physical valuation as an aid in regulation. There was no mention of direct legislation. The more recent trend of public sentiment was revealed in a demand for campaign publicity, and an indictment of the Speaker's power in the House of Representatives. In spite of that portion of the platform which demanded that "it be made impossible for a private monopoly to exist in the United States," it is not too much to say that the Democratic declaration of 1908 emphasized the need of reform rather than called loudly for a revolution. Considering the circumstances under which this platform was constructed and the fact that Bryan was the candidate, the position of the party

appeared less advanced than it had in 1900. During this campaign, as never before in his career, it was urged by Bryan's adherents that he was no longer a radical, in that the country had caught up with him. In a measure this was true, for in emphasizing reform Bryan was in agreement with the more advanced Republicans. The out-and-out radicals were insistent in pointing this out. In November the four radical parties cast 546,000 votes, of which 420,890 were cast for Debs.

Bryan's vote was 1,323,000 more than Parker's vote in 1904, but he failed to poll the vote he received in 1896. He carried fourteen states in the South and four in the West: Nevada, Colorado, Nebraska, and Oklahoma, the last-named state appearing for the first time in the electoral college. His majorities outside of the South were small. The distribution of the county vote was on the whole as it was in 1900; in addition to 46 new counties in Oklahoma, Bryan carried 70 counties he had not carried in 1900. But he lost 133 counties that he had carried in 1900. In all sections the distribution of the county vote showed him weaker in 1908 than he had been in 1900.¹

It is fair to say that in the canvas of 1908 a majority of the voters desired a revision of the tariff, a check placed upon the Speaker's power in the House, and a stricter control of monopoly. All these the Democrats promised. They emphasized in particular the very general cry, "restore the government to the people." At the same time the Republican tariff plank was ambiguous and made pleasing to a widespread sentiment in the Middle West only by the campaign utterance of Candidate Taft, the influence of Speaker Cannon was prominently present in the councils of the party during the campaign, and the repeated failures of President Roosevelt to gain from the Republican leaders in the Senate what he demanded had commenced to breed the suspicion that additional trust legislation might not be expected through the agency of the Republican party. Moreover, the country was still suffering from the panicky conditions of 1907, and the two most prominent leaders of organized labor were openly favoring the election of the Democratic candidate.

¹ A comparison of the geographic distribution by states of the votes of 1904 and 1908 may be found in E. Stanwood, *History of the Presidency*, II, 209-11.

In spite of all these apparently favoring conditions Bryan failed of election because of the continued lack of confidence in the Democratic party.

It was natural that this want of confidence should be ascribed to Bryan's leadership. The distribution of the Parker vote in 1904 would tend to disprove this, and the vote cast for Wilson in 1912 makes such an explanation impossible. The declared position of the party in all three campaigns was essentially the same. The basic anti-trust declaration was identical. Candidate Wilson, of southern birth and eastern residence with a record as a progressive governor of an eastern state but warmly supported by Bryan, was unable to bring a majority of the voters to the Democratic standard. His vote was slightly less than that cast for Bryan in 1908, it was distributed in much the same areas and undoubtedly represented the same elements.¹ The failure of the Democratic party to gain control of Congress or to keep it, except by reason of division in the opposition, strengthens the view that it has been neither platforms nor candidates that have given place to the Democratic party in the public mind. The party has continued to decline in public favor for three reasons: (1) In 1896 it polled the vote of all radicals except the Social Laborites, and its record since then has alienated these elements. (2) The preponderance of southerners in the Democratic representation in Congress has resulted in a party record that has not been satisfactory to the agricultural elements of the West that formed the basis for the new Democracy in 1896. (3) With the rise to public importance of the Progressive Republicans the Democracy has had to meet proposals for reform urged by a party in power and by middlewestern leaders with a reputation for getting things accomplished.²

The growth in the Socialist vote and the increasing radicalism of western Republicans strengthened the view that the Democracy had failed as a party of protest. The reactionary record of a portion

¹ An analysis of the "Distribution of the Presidential Vote of 1912" may be found in the *American Journal of Sociology*, XX, 18-30 (July, 1914). In this paper I have compared the distribution of 1908 with that of 1912.

² For the results of the activity of Insurgent Republicans see my paper on "Recent Manifestations of Sectionalism," *American Journal of Sociology*, XIX, 446-67 (January, 1914).

TABLE I

COUNTIES RETURNING DEMOCRATIC MAJORITIES IN PRESIDENTIAL ELECTIONS

States	1896	1900	1904	1908	1912
Alabama.....	61	54	65	61	58
Arizona.....					8
Arkansas.....	73	67	65	64	68
California.....	32	17	2	6	38
Colorado.....	54	41	8	33	23
Connecticut.....	0	0	0	0	0
Delaware.....	0	0	0	0	1
Florida.....	45	45	45	45	48
Georgia.....	110	125	126	114	135
Idaho.....	21	14	0	4	2
Illinois.....	39	41	17	33	31
Indiana.....	44	39	16	45	34
Iowa.....	13	6	1	12	7
Kansas.....	71	20	0	7	6
Kentucky.....	66	56	67	68	62
Louisiana.....	53	58	59	59	61
Maine.....	0	1	0	0	1
Maryland.....	4	7	14	15	13
Massachusetts.....	0	1	1	0	0
Michigan.....	15	1	0	0	0
Minnesota.....	17	4	0	4	4
Mississippi.....	75	75	76	78	79
Missouri.....	87	75	51	60	59
Montana.....	21	14	2	7	2
Nebraska.....	66	31	0	44	13
Nevada.....	14	14	0	6	5
New Jersey.....	2	3	4	3	4
New Hampshire.....	0	0	0	0	0
New Mexico.....					9
New York.....	1	4	4	4	5
North Carolina.....	59	60	75	60	76
North Dakota.....	8	0	0	0	0
Ohio.....	33	27	17	31	27
Oklahoma.....				46	57
Oregon.....	15	5	0	0	0
Pennsylvania.....	12	14	9	11	11
Rhode Island.....	0	0	0	0	0
South Carolina.....	39	39	41	43	44
South Dakota.....	29	7	0	2	14
Tennessee.....	54	60	54	56	52
Texas.....	216	227	230	219	230
Utah.....	26	6	1	1	1
Vermont.....	0	0	0	0	0
Virginia.....	75	86	97	97	107
Washington.....	25	10	0	0	0
West Virginia.....	23	17	17	16	20
Wisconsin.....	3	4	3	6	15
Wyoming.....	6	0	0	0	1
	1,617	1,375	1,167	1,360	1,431
New counties				46	74
Counties with no <i>Republican</i> ticket (1912).....					52
	1,617	1,375	1,167	1,314	1,305

of the House Democracy in the rules fight of 1909 and the protectionist tendencies of a group of Democratic senators, revealed in the votes on the Payne-Aldrich tariff measure, increased public distrust of the party. Not because of returning confidence, but because of a schism in the Republican party, a majority of Democrats were elected to the House of Representatives in the fall of 1910. Two years later the same conditions enabled the party to capture the presidency and to gain a small majority in the Senate. But in all, the Democrats represented a decided minority of the electorate and, as has been pointed out above, the Democracy continued to decline in public support.¹

No consideration is given to the status of the Democracy since the inauguration of Wilson. There have been manifestations of widespread approval of Wilson's personal leadership, but also abundant evidences of a continued distrust of the Democratic party. To determine whether or not by reason of Democratic enactments under the President's leadership the election of 1912 is to mark the end of a period of decline we must wait upon an analysis of the returns from the congressional elections of the present year.

During the last eighteen years there have been certain areas in which the Democracy has always secured a majority of the votes. In five presidential elections 1,069 counties have invariably been Democratic. In ten congressional elections 102 districts have each time returned Democrats. The distribution of the counties and districts leads to the conclusion that in most cases these majorities have been moved more by habit than by conviction. It is true that in the greater portion of them conviction on a subject outside the scope of national platforms may account for all of the apparent solidity, but that conviction has itself become a habit. If the decline in Democratic majorities continues in the future as it has since 1896, it is only a matter of time when conviction will overcome habit and the Democratic party will disappear.

¹ Of 291 Democrats elected to Congress in 1912, 79 did not receive a majority of the votes in their districts. The Democratic party had not a majority mandate for the control of the House of Representatives.